

Impact on Children of Caregiver Substance Use: Recommendations for Policy & Practice

KEY COLORADO DATA

- **30%** of caregivers reported having on average 3 or more alcoholic drinks per day in the past 30 days.
- Nearly **1 in 6** caregivers with marijuana in the home reported not keeping it in childproof containers.
- Treatment admission rates increased **262%** for heroin and **72%** for methamphetamines (2009-2016) and in 2016 methamphetamines resulted in more admissions than heroin.
- **15.7%** of Coloradans in need of substance use treatment services receive them.
- **3.3%** of outpatient substance use disorder treatment facilities provide child care.
- Accidental drug overdose was the **leading** cause of death among postpartum women (2004-2012).
- **12%** of women reported drinking alcohol during the last 3 months of pregnancy.
- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome increased by **83%** from 2010 to 2015.
- The **majority** of child welfare referrals related to substance abuse issues involved an infant less than 1 month old (2012-2016).
- More than **10%** of the individuals whose action or inaction directly caused or contributed to a child maltreatment death were impaired by alcohol at the time of the incident, and just over **12%** were impaired by drugs (2011-2015).
- **48%** of families involved in a fatal incident of child maltreatment reviewed by the Child Fatality Review Team had a history of identified substance abuse.
- **30%** of adults that reported an adverse childhood experience came from households with substance abuse.

Spanning prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery, recommendations address impacts on children birth through adolescence, related to caregiver substance use, substance misuse, and substance use disorders to prevent child maltreatment and improve outcomes for families.

ADVANCING POLICY

- 1 Revise the child abuse definitions in the Colorado Children's Code to de-emphasize the focus on positive drug tests for controlled substances at time of birth.
- 2 Evaluate the options for increasing accessibility and availability of Part C Early Intervention Services for children that were prenatally exposed to substances.
- 3 Increase availability and accessibility of substance use treatment and recovery support services for parents / caregivers, specifically pregnant & postpartum women.
- 4 Increase Early Childhood Mental Health Services to adequately address issues of trauma in children in early childhood settings and support similar networks for school settings.
- 5 Expand the resources and influence of the Colorado Children's Trust Fund to coordinate and support state and local efforts to prevent child maltreatment by preventing substance exposure in newborns.
- 6 Support the work of the Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Interim Study Committee to identify and advocate for increasing access to treatment for parents/caregivers and their children.



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TRANSFORMING PRACTICE

- 1 Embed a professional, such as a family navigator, case manager, or social worker, in law enforcement teams interfacing with families, specifically drug task forces, to provide training to officers, support services to families, and access to outside resources.
- 2 Promote community-based approaches to expanding child care options for parents accessing substance use disorder treatment and recovery services.
- 3 Endorse the Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action & encourage inclusion of considerations related to the impact on children of caregiver substance use in child maltreatment prevention community planning efforts.
- 4 Support existing efforts to scale a continuum of home visiting programs across the state.
- 5 Disseminate tools that build skills among professionals interfacing with families to have educational conversations with caregivers about substance use, safe storage, and child safety.
- 6 Support the dissemination of a toolkit to improve social connections in communities to reduce parental stress and increase support systems to promote resilience and buffer potential impacts on children of caregiver substance use.
- 7 Conduct a review of the educational and awareness needs, review best practices, and develop a plan to address these needs related to the impact on children of caregiver substance use.
- 8 Partner with existing organizations and coalitions addressing policy approaches to building safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments and bring the lens of the impact on children of caregiver substance use.
- 9 Promote community-based strategies to implement plans of safe care for substance exposed newborns and their caregivers as required by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).
- 10 Increase consistency in implementation of best practice approaches in the identification of and response to newborns prenatally exposed to substances and their caregivers at the time of birth across Colorado.
- 11 Support existing practice improvement efforts to increase accessibility and availability of substance use disorder treatment and recovery support services that meet the needs of parents / caregivers, including pregnant and postpartum women.
- 12 Expand the use of the Dependency and Neglect System Reform approach in child welfare cases with substance use or co-occurring mental health disorders throughout the state.
- 13 Increase support services to the whole family to support caregiver's recovery and children's needs and to prevent generational cycles of substance use.
- 14 Advocate for improved data collection, interoperability of data collection systems, and data sharing to inform decision making and improve practice related to addressing the impact on children of caregiver substance use.